1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
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of the earliest foreign records such as that found in the tract *De Moribus Brachmanorum* written about 400 A.D., the author of which professes to have obtained his information from a Theban traveller.

To Robert Knox, who wrote in 1681 after a captivity in Ceylon lasting 20 years, belongs the credit of having first accurately described the Veddas. "Of these *Natives* there be two sorts *Wild* and *Tame*. I will begin with the former. For as in these Woods there are Wild *Beasts* so Wild *Men* also. The Land of *Bintan* is all covered with mighty Woods, filled with abundance of *Deer*. In this Land are many of these wild men; they call them *Vaddahs*, dwelling near no other Inhabitants. They speak the *Chingulayes* Language. They kill *Deer*, and dry the Flesh over the fire, and the people of the Countrey come and buy it of them. They never Till any ground for Corn, their Food being only Flesh. They are very expert with their Bows. They have a little ax, which they stick by their sides, to cut hony out of hollow Trees. Some few, which are near Inhabitants, have commerce with other people. They have no Towns nor Houses, only live by the waters under a Tree, with some boughs cut and laid about them, to give notice when any wild Beasts come near, which they may hear by their rustling and trampling upon them. Many of these Habitations we saw when we fled through the Woods, but God be praised the *Vaddahs* were gone.

"Some of the tamer sort of these men are in a kind of Subjection to the King. For if they be found, tho it must be with a great search in the woods, they will acknowledge his Officers, and will bring to them *Elephant-teeth*, and *Honey*, and *Wax*, and *Deer's Flesh*; but the others in lieu thereof do give them near as much, in Arrows, Cloth, etc. fearing lest they should otherwise appear no more.

"It had been reported to me by many people, that the wilder sort of them, when they want Arrows, will carry their load of Flesh in the night, and hang it up in a *Smith's* Shop, also a Leaf cut in the form they will have their Arrows made, and hang by it. Which if the *Smith* do make according to their Pattern they will requite, and bring him more Flesh;

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
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territory in the neighbourhood of Pattiavelagalge cave described in Chapter v. This was about 100 years ago, and may have been connected with the troubles of the revolution which undoubtedly led to an influx of Sinhalese into the wilds of the Vedda country.

Further, the eschatological beliefs of the Kandyan Sinhalese furnish abundant evidence that these have been influenced by the Veddas, and certain of these beliefs can be explained on no other hypothesis, unless it be asserted that the beliefs of the Veddas and those of the invading Sinhalese were from the first nearly identical. We refer particularly to the *bandara* beliefs described on pp. 141 to 145, which have probably attained to the position they now hold because, as pointed out to us by Mr Parker, it is in accordance with Sinhalese Buddhist teaching that the spirits of the deceased may become *yaku*. This of course might merely imply that Sinhalese Buddhism had originally been influenced by the Vedda Cult of the Dead, but that this is not the explanation is shown by the fact—for information concerning which we are indebted to Mr Parker—that the Low-Country Sinhalese have nothing of the Kandyan "hero and ancestor worship" as it is styled by this authority[1].

Sir James Emerson Tennant devoted a chapter of his monumental work to the Veddas, but interesting as this chapter is it contains "little else than a comparison of the habits of the people of the island, as observed by the ancient voyagers in the fourth and fifth centuries, with the traditional...customs of the Veddahs as reported by Knox. The accomplished author throws no new light on the wild tribes of the Veddahs as they are. On the contrary, his account of them is in some important particulars defective, and even inaccurate. He glances casually at those tribes which are in the wildest state, touching with precision none of their peculiarities, and dwells in detail upon those only, which, from long association with the Sinhalese and Tamil races, have lost much of their originality. Of the ancient aborigines he has compiled much that is curious. Of the existing Veddahs he has given us little besides an epitome of former notices."

[1] We again quote from one of Mr Parker's letters.

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
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So wrote John Bailey in 1863 in a footnote to the paper in which his own observations are reported, and no one who knows the Veddas will disagree with him. Indeed, Bailey's paper is a remarkably careful and critical piece of work, concerning which all must agree with Nevill who recognised it as the first scientific account of the Veddas[1].

It was succeeded in 1881 by a summary by Virchow of what was then known of the Veddas, and measurements were given of a number of Vedda skulls. This paper was translated into English and published in 1886 in Vol. IX of the *Journal of the Ceylon Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*. But no original detailed study of the sociology of the Veddas appeared until the extremely valuable observations of the late Hugh Nevill, to which we shall frequently refer, appeared in the *Taprobanian*, to be followed in 1893 by a magnificently illustrated work *Die Weddas von Ceylon und die sie umgebenden Völkerschaften*, published by the Doctors Paul and Fritz Sarasin, which however deals less fully with the sociology than with the physical anthropology of the Veddas[2].

Three articles by Dr L. Rutimeyer, published in 1903[3], describe the author's impressions of parties of Danigala and Henebedda Veddas who visited him at Bibile Rest House and review the then existing condition of our knowledge concerning the ethnology of the Veddas, finishing with a summary of the views expressed by the Sarasins concerning the relationship of the Veddas to other races.

As this volume will scarcely touch on physical anthropology we now give a short account of the chief physical characteristics

[1] *Taprobanian*, 1887, Vol. I, p. 175.

[2] It must not be thought, however, that the period from 1863 to 1893 was absolutely barren; Mr B. L. Hartshorne published a paper dealing with the village Veddas of Uva Bintenne in the *Fortnightly Review* in 1876, and papers on the Veddas continued to appear in the *Journal of the Ceylon Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*. One paper, that by C. Stevens (*Proc. Roy. As. Soc. Ceylon Branch*, 1886), must be regarded as absolutely misleading, and the value of many of these communications is reduced by the absence of data concerning the origin and mode of collection of the information given. Thus in Volume VII, 1881, Mr Louis De Zoysa published a number of Vedda songs which would be of great value if a single word were said of where, how, or by whom they were collected. This literature will be found in a bibliography given by the Sarasins on p. 594 of their work.

[3] *Die Miguskrankheit in Ceylon*. Globus 1903.

1;Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
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142 is rarely prominent. The lips, though well developed, are not tumid (except sometimes in the young); sometimes the mouth is rather flat. This when accompanied by moderately prominent cheek bones gives some faces an expression of considerable energy. The jaw is not prognathous, the nostrils are moderately broad, the root of the nose is depressed but never flattened to any considerable degree. The average of the nasal indices of 141 17 skulls gave the figure 52·7 (minimum 43·3, maximum 62·2, median 52·3), which is just short of the index (53) at which platyrrhiny is commonly assumed to begin. Nevertheless we believe that the Veddas may more fairly be classed as mesorrhine than platyrrhine, for certainly the impression made on us by the living was that they were not specially broad-nosed. The capacity of the 18 male skulls described by the Sarasins varies from 1012 to 1502 c.c. with an average of 1278 c.c.: none of the three female Vedda skulls from the inner Vedda district have a capacity of less than 1150 c.c., though there is a skull of an adult Vedda woman in the Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons with a capacity of only 960 c.c.

Summing up the physical characters to which we have briefly referred we may define the Veddas as a short, wavy-haired, dolichocephalic race, with moderately long faces and moderately broad noses. Expressing the results of measurements taken by the Sarasins we may say that chamaeprosopes[1] and leptoprosopes occur in about equal numbers, and that the Veddas are mesorrhine or present a low grade of platyrrhiny.

● 114 The latest Vedda literature of any importance is a volume 112 published by the Sarasins which records the work they did in Ceylon during 1907 when they established the existence of a stone age upon the island. This fact had not been realised before, though two naturalists, Mr E. E. Green and Mr J. Pole, both old residents, had already collected and recognised as artifacts the quartz implements which were the typical product of the stone age in Ceylon, and which, as pointed out by the Sarasins, are most reasonably to be attributed to the Veddas. A number of rock shelters were explored; these were situated at Kataragam in the south of the island where no Veddas now exist, and in other parts of Uva, in the present Vedda country.

[1] [Leptoprosopes, see p. xx. —Analyst]

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
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Not all the caves investigated yielded evidence of prehistoric habitation, but from a certain number were obtained quartz, chert and shell implements which put the matter beyond doubt and conclusively show that Ceylon formerly possessed a stone age. The greater part of the volume is taken up by an account of prehistoric quartz and chert artifacts, and the excellent reproductions given by the authors show that the quartz implements they discovered belong to the same type as those found by ourselves and described elsewhere[1].

But in addition the Sarasins found hammer stones, a few pieces of worked bone, and a series of shells of the large land snail (*Helix phoenix*), the curve of each shell being occupied by a circular hole large enough to allow of its sharp edge being used as a cutting tool[2].

Plate VIII shows a number of typical Vedda implements. All are of quartz except No. 2 which is of chert. Nos. 1 and 3 are worked on one side only, the unworked side being shown in order to illustrate the well-marked bulb of percussion which distinguishes many of the specimens. The general characteristics of these implements are so well shown in the plate that a description in detail is not necessary. Attention may, however, be called to figures 6, 8 and 9; the first of these shows a large part of the outer surface of the quartz pebble from which it was made. No. 8 belongs to a type of which numerous examples occur among European stone implements, this specimen is thicker than is usual and measures 15 mm. from one surface to the other. No. 9 can scarcely have been intended for anything but an arrow head, two views are given of this remarkable implement which comes from a cave on the Scarborough Estate at Maskeliya, and for a drawing of which I am indebted to Mr Pole. No. 2 is of chert and was found in the same cave; two views of this implement are given. The localities from which the other specimens were collected were as follows: No. 1 was found by Mr Pole at Maskeliya, No. 3 we picked up at Bandarawela, No. 4 was collected by Mr Green

[1] C. G. Seligmann, "Quartz Implements from Ceylon," *Man*, 1908, 63.

[2] These shells in fact constitute a primitive plane or spokeshave and resemble those found in Queensland and some parts of South America at the present day.

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
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CHAPTER VII

RELIGION (CONTINUED)

WE have now described the fundamental ideas of the Vedda cult of the dead, but superposed upon these there are two other strata of belief both of which have influenced the religion of certain groups of Veddas to a greater or less extent. Before discussing these we may briefly indicate the views of the more thorough of previous investigators. In this as in other matters Knox was better informed than many of his successors when he said of the Veddas, "The *tamer* do build Temples, the wild only bring their sacrifice under Trees, and while it is offering dance round it, both men and women[1]." Tennant's account adds little to this; Bailey's account, undoubtedly the most complete and trustworthy that has been given to date, is not quoted here because it will be found almost in full on pp. 160 and 161 where the religious beliefs of the Nilgala Veddas are discussed. Tennant writes, "They have no knowledge of a God, nor of a future state...in short, no instinct of worship, except...when sick, they send for devil dancers to drive away the evil spirit, who is believed to inflict the disease. The dance is executed in front of an offering of something eatable, placed on a tripod of sticks, the dancer having his head and girdle decorated with green leaves. At first he shuffles with his feet to a plaintive air, and by degrees he works himself into a state of great excitement and action, accompanied by moans and screams, and during this paroxysm, he professes to be inspired with instruction for the cure of the patient[2]."

[1] *Op. cit.* p. 63.
[2] Tennant, *op. cit.* pp. 441 and 442.

[p. 146]

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
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Even Nevill missed the essentials of the Vedda cult of the dead, though he shows that he knew something of what actually occurred. "The Vaedda religion seems to have been such that the spirit alone was recognised as human, and the flesh, when the spirit has left it, receives neither veneration nor superstitious reverence. Where the life left the body, there the body was left....Two or five days after the death, however, the relations were invited to the scene of funeral and a feast was held...to satisfy relations there had been no foul play....

"The Vaeddas of Bintenne, however, having assembled relations and neighbours, procure rice, or other grain, and decorate the pot in which it is cooked with sprays of the liniya tree[1], a shrub with leaves like our hazel, but with bright scarlet flowers. If no flowers can be got, bits of red cotton or other cloth should be used. The celebrant then dances round the pot of food, with an arrow in his hand, singing any chant he knows, and making obeisance to the food by a wave of the arrow. The food is then distributed....

"It is evident this custom cannot apply to those who formerly did not eat grain. These, however, were few. Roasted game would probably with such take the place of grain, and the latter seems only used as the best and most unusual food procurable, much as our poor try to provide cake, and not bread and cheese, etc. at weddings....

"Bodies were never buried until the English Government endeavoured to enforce burial. The Vaeddas have not the least objection to the corpse being buried, but object greatly to being forced to dig the grave...[2]."

Although the Sarasins underestimated the importance of the Vedda cult of the dead, and failed to discover that even "Nature" Veddas make offerings to the spirits of their departed, their opinions and conclusions are necessarily given at some length on account of the undoubted importance of their work. "The Veddas of Dewilane told us that after death they became spirits or yakas, but as to whether these persisted (*lebten*) or not they never thought; they did not pray to them nor honour them. The 'Nature' Veddas from Danigala...told us in 1885

[1] *Helictera isora*, L.

[2] *Taprobanian*, Vol. 1, p. 179.

1;Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
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that they worshipped neither their ancestors, nor a devil nor a god. Five years later the Veddas settled at Henebedda in the Nilgala district told us that they believed that the dead became spirits or yakas; but they did not make offerings to them. At Wewatte they likewise believe that the dead become yakas and there they invoke them in cases of sickness...gods they have none. A Vedda from the neighbourhood of Kalodai (Pallegama district) named Manikrala informed us that they worshipped children, father, mother, grandfather, grandmother—in short their dead relatives. In remembrance of the death of such relatives they gave a present to the first Buddhist priest whom they met. We therefore asked this 'Culture' Vedda whether his relatives continued to live as spirits after death, but he replied that he did not know; the present of rice was simply in remembrance of the deceased man. In answer to the further question whether they had a definite religion or worshipped a god, he replied that he had never thought about it, and he gave us the impression that this question and the idea it suggested were new to him.

"We found the idea of the existence of the departed as spirits further developed in an old 'Culture' Vedda of Mudagala near Mahaoya, named Sella. He said they had no gods besides their departed. Every year at the full moon they consumed yams and other food at the burying place. On this occasion they hold a dance in honour of the departed, invoke the dead by name and pray them to help them. At Omuni the corpses were buried in Sinhalese fashion and provided with burial presents; but two Veddas when we questioned them about their religion could tell us nothing on this point, and said that the departed were not honoured as gods[1]."

From these data the Sarasins conclude that "genuine 'Nature' Veddas either lack, or at the most have a quite uncertain idea of the persistence of the souls of the dead at the site of death, and that they make no offerings to their manes[2]." Further, they state "that among 'Culture' Veddas this idea has developed but little, for they either answered that they did not know whether they persisted as souls after death, or that they

[1] *Op. cit.* pp. 497 and 498. [2] *Loc. cit.*

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
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had never thought the matter over. Nevertheless they honour the names which like the Sinhalese they call Yakas with food, dances or offerings. Any monotheistic idea of God is absent both in 'Nature' and in 'Culture' Veddas[1]."

The three strata of belief to which we referred at the beginning of this chapter and which exist among the Veddas of the present day, have not fused so thoroughly that there is any great difficulty in isolating them. We believe they may be tabulated as follows:

I. The Cult of the dead, including the cult of the spirits of recent ancestors, i.e. of the Nae Yaku and the *yaku* of certain Veddas who have been long dead and may well be regarded as heroes. The most important of these is Kande Yaka.

II. The Cult of foreign spirits, who have become naturalised and have taken the friendly protective nature of the Vedda *yaku*.

III. The Cult of foreign spirits who, though not often regarded as such, have retained their foreign nature and are in the main terrible or even hostile.

Another feature of the last stratum of thought is the endowment of true Vedda *yaku* with foreign attributes[2]. When the history of the island is considered, it is not surprising that the first condition, which may be considered the primitive religion of the Veddas, should nowhere be found standing alone at the present day. It is impossible to say how much the Indian invaders influenced the aboriginal inhabitants of Lanka (Ceylon) when they took possession of the island under Vijeyo about 500 B.C., for the few references made to Veddas in the ancient chronicles of the country throw no light on this subject.

Knox mentions that Veddas paid a tribute of game and honey to the Sinhalese, and in his day there were "wild and tame" Veddas, and it is certain that from the middle ages onwards there was a considerable amount of intercourse between at least the tamer Veddas and the Sinhalese. Therefore it is natural that foreign beliefs should have gradually infiltrated the native Vedda cult.

[1] *Ibid.*

[2] The invocation (No. XLI) to Ambänpoti Kiriamma given on p. 316 is an excellent example of this. Billindi Yaka is here treated as if he were a Sinhalese or Tamil deity.

1;Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
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'Má miya, má miya, má deyá,
Topang koyihetti mittigan yandáh!'

'My departed one, my departed one, my God!
Where art thou wandering?'

The spirit of the dead is here simply called upon, without even the object for which it is invoked being mentioned. And this invocation appears to be used on all occasions, when the intervention of the guardian spirit is required, in sickness, preparatory to hunting, etc.

"Sometimes, in the latter case, a portion of the flesh of the game is promised as a votive offering, in the event of the chase being successful; and they believe that the spirits will appear to them in dreams and tell them where to hunt.

"Sometimes they cook food and place it in the dry bed of a river, or some other secluded spot, and then call on their deceased ancestors by name. 'Come, and partake of this! Give us maintenance as you did when living! Come! wheresoever you may be; on a tree, on a rock, in the forest, come!' and they dance round the food, half chanting, half shouting, the invocation.

"They have no knowledge of a Supreme Being. 'Is he on a rock? On a white ant-hill? On a tree? I never saw a God!' was the only reply I received to repeated questions. They have no idols, offer no sacrifices, and pour no libations. They cannot be said to have any temples, for the few sticks sometimes erected, with a branch thrown over them, are, I imagine, simply to protect their votive offerings[1]."

Although in essentials this account is accurate, certain corrections and suggestions must be made. The "bilindoo yakkoon" are not "infant spirits" but obviously represent Bilindi Yaka who became a *yaka* while still a child. The arrow dance is clearly described and agrees with the dance we saw and photographed near Bendiyagalge, figures of which are given in Plate XXVI.

With regard to the spirits of the dead appearing in dreams and stating where game will be found, this, which is quite contradictory to our experience, has already been referred to on

[1] J. Bailey, *op. cit.* pp. 100—103.

1;Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
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114 p. 135, but it may be noted that Bailey clearly did not know of the existence of shamanistic ceremonies and we have little doubt that the information given him, which he took to refer to dreams, in fact described the experiences of possession. The "few sticks...with a branch thrown over them" are clearly remains of the *mesas* upon which the offerings are placed.

775 753 The *Maha Yakino* are the spirits of old Vedda women, the chief of whom is the Maha Kiriamma, who, as Bailey pointed out in 1863, is more feared than loved, and in many cases is supposed to send sickness. It was said that her name was Anami and that she lived at Okegala near Alutnuwara, dying of old age; but in spite of these circumstantial details, which are perhaps due to the teachings of Tissahami, neither the name nor the memory of her husband has survived.

775 Unapane Kiriamma is another important *Maha Yakini* who lived near Unapane[1].

Unapane Kiriamma also gives luck in honey getting, and it is thought that she in some way causes bees to build good combs, in fact, all the *Maha Yakino* are associated with rock honey from the belief that they especially affect the rocky crests of hills[2].

Although the *Maha Yakino* are looked upon as the spirits of old Vedda women and are reputed to show their fondness for children by kidnapping them, they are regarded with considerable awe, for they are considered to send disease, and it is necessary to make an offering to them in order that this may be removed. This is generally done at the *kolamaduwa* ceremony described on p. 268. With the exception of the

[842] [1] She is known to the jungle Sinhalese of the Vedirata, who state that with her husband Unapane Kaira Wanniya she made the Unapane paddy fields. She is particularly invoked by barren women, and those who have brought forth still-born children, for increase of cattle and milk, to prevent cattle being taken by leopards or damaging the crops and to give good harvests.

[823] [2] Offerings of honey made to the *Maha Yakino* are described elsewhere. The belief that the *Maha Yakino* are especially associated with hills is also found among the Sinhalese of the Vedda country, who especially associate these spirits with hills on which springs are found or on which streams arise. One such hill near Nilgala, which at the end of the rains has many small streams running down its face, is known as Yakini Ela and is especially associated by the neighbouring Sinhalese with the *Maha Yakino*, who they say can be heard moving about the crest at night.

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
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still dancing, stripped the leaves from the *alutyakagama*, and, holding on to the horizontal cross bar, shook the framework violently in order to drive away any of the *yaku* who might still be resting there.

[114]

Unfortunately we were not able to get much trustworthy information about this or any of the other dances at Unuwatura Bubula, as Sela Kaurala, who appeared to suffer from asthma and chronic bronchitis, coughed up a good deal of blood after this dance, and was unable to discuss the ceremony with us afterwards. His pupil, Naida Kaurala, was not nearly so well informed. There were several points which we were unable to settle satisfactorily; Gale Yaku, we were told, were many and not one Yaka, yet Gale Yaka or Yaku seemed confused with Kande Yaka, for we were told that the big *aude* was for Kande Yaka and the smaller one for Bilindi Yaka. Nevertheless the shaman held both when dancing to Gale Yaka, and he spun the pot of rice, which in several other communities had been done by the shaman when possessed by Kande Yaka.

The Ruwala Ceremony.

This ceremony was danced by the Veddas of Uniche. It began by Wannaku, who was wearing a *hangala* of new white cloth, moving slowly round the centre post of the *ruwala* holding a bunch of leaves in each hand and reciting an invocation to Ruwala Yaka and Yakini, who live on Nuwaragala. He stood close to the central pole of the *ruwala*, and at first faced towards the north, that is, not in the direction of Nuwaragala but towards the quarter whence came the *yaku* who live on Nuwaragala and other hills who are invoked in this dance. These *yaku* were not the spirits of the dead, but had always existed as *yaku*. The original home was on the other side of the ocean in Handun Kaele, the "sandal-wood jungle," which the educated, but not the peasant, Sinhalese recognise as being in India. Long ago the *yaku* made a raft and crossed the ocean, and the sail (Sin. *ruwala*) and mast of their raft are represented by the centre pole (*ruwala*) of the structure of that name, while the streamers represent the "silver" and "golden" stays of their mast.

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
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CHAPTER XIII

MUSIC

By C. S. Myers.

Introductory.

The account of Vedda music given in this section is based upon an examination of thirty-four phonographic records of songs obtained from the Veddas by Dr and Mrs Seligmann[1].

These songs are probably simpler in structure than any other native songs hitherto studied.

Nine of the tunes are composed of only two notes. In three others the tune consists also of two notes, but with the addition of one or more unimportant grace-notes. These twelve songs may be conveniently classed as belonging to Group A.

Twelve other songs consist of three notes only. These we shall class under Group B.

Nine songs contain four notes, and one consists of five notes. These we shall consider as Group C.

Of the songs in Group A, in no case is the range sensibly greater than our whole-tone interval. With the exception of two anomalous songs, no song in Group B has a range sensibly greater than our minor third. With one exception, no song in Group C has a range greater than a fourth.

There is evidence that the songs of Group A are more archaic than those of Groups B and C. For, unaware of the above system of classification, Dr Seligmann was asked to indicate those songs which appeared to him (on grounds of language, ceremonial, etc.) most probably archaic and those

[1 We received the manuscript of this chapter from Dr Myers in November 1909, but owing to our absence from England, publication was deferred for six months. Meanwhile, in the *Quarterly Magazine of the International Musical Society* (Year xi, Part 2, 1910) there appeared a short account of Vedda music by Herr Max Wertheimer, based on an examination of four phonographic records obtained by Frau M. Selenka. Dr Myers has thus had no opportunity of alluding to Herr Wertheimer's observations in this chapter.]

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-S (1907-1908) 1911
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Sinhalese, as a foreign language which the Veddas long ago adopted in the place of their own.

The obvious phonetic changes from the Sinhalese which we noted in the Vedda dialect were the substitution for the sibilant "s" of the palatal "ch" which though generally retained might be thrown out, thus "head" Sin. *isa* becomes in the Vedda dialect *iya* or sometimes *icha*, and *gas* the Sinhalese word for "tree" becomes *gai* or *gayi* in Vedda. There may be other phonetic changes which an expert linguist would detect, but certainly the substitution of "ch" for "s" is the change which gives its characteristic harsh quality to the Vedda dialect.

A number of authors have published short lists of Vedda words, that given by the Sarasins being of most importance, for although it consists of only 22 words care is taken to indicate the equivalent in use in each of the Vedda groups visited by the authors. More complete vocabularies have been collected by Bailey and Nevill, and vocabularies have also been published by two native scholars. One of these, who wrote under the *nom-de-plume* A. J. W., Batticaloa, has published his material in a somewhat inaccessible periodical, the *Ceylon Literary Register* (Vol. v, 1891). His information, which includes a number of sentences and lullabies, has evidently been carefully collected and would probably be specially useful to Sinhalese and Sanskrit scholars. Its great defect is that no mention is made of the places where the information was obtained, or the conditions prevailing when it was collected.

Mr A. J. W. Marrambe's publication entitled *The Vedda Language* and apparently printed at Colombo in 1893 which contains some Vedda invocations is of less value, for while it suffers from the same defects it does not appear to have been prepared with the care which characterises the vocabulary in the *Literary Register*[1].

An important if indirect contribution to the study of the Vedda language has recently been made by Mr Parker, who, in *Ancient Ceylon*, gives in parallel columns Nevill's Vedda vocabulary and the equivalents of these words in the Kaelebasa

[1] The identity of initials suggests that the two accounts may be by one author.

1;Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
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language, collected by himself during his long sojourn in Ceylon; and to this we shall return later.

The Vedda words for the most important animals with which they are brought in contact which are given in the vocabulary at the end of this volume indicate that nouns and verbs in the Vedda dialect are largely formed by periphrasis. It may be urged that in certain cases this is done for the same reason that the common names of animals are avoided in all hunting languages, and doubtless this explains why the bear is commonly spoken of as *hatera* "the enemy[1]," but it will not account for one of the words for "smoke" being "that which goes from the fire when wet," or "to bring" being "to come having taken things" or for "wind" being "that which causes the stems of trees to break." Mr Parker informs us that the expression "having taken, come," for "bring" is common in Sinhalese, while Dr L. D. Barnett, whom we have consulted on the subject of periphrases, writes that "compound actions" are often expressed by paraphrase, thus the Hindi for "bring" is *le dana*, i.e. "taking give," and "depart" is *nikal jana*, i.e. "issuing go." These examples show that there is nothing peculiar or specially significant in the existence in the Vedda dialect of such periphrasis for "bring" as that given above.

Such expressions might be survivals from a time when the Vedda vocabulary was limited, when quick precision was unnecessary or at least had not been attained, and when all ideas, except the simplest, were necessarily expressed in a roundabout fashion and generally helped out by gesture. We allude in Chapter XVI to the absolute impossibility of making even such an intelligent man as Handuna of Sitala Wanniya realise the difference between a number of periods of time all shorter than a day, and in the same chapter we point out that the older generation of unsophisticated Veddas count only by saying

[1] At Sitala Wanniya we were told that the word *kuriya* might be used for "bear" without danger when the animal was at a distance, but that *katera* should be used if the animal were known or suspected to be close. Here too the word *kotakalala* was used for elephant avowedly to prevent these animals hearing their name and coming near. *Hatera* should be written *katura*, but as we never heard any Vedda pronounce this word otherwise than *katera*, we use this spelling throughout.

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

CHAPTER XVII

CONCLUSIONS

IN the first chapter we have given an account of those facts in the history and pre-history of Ceylon which must be taken into account in any investigation of the Veddas, and we referred (p. 27) to the common Sinhalese belief that the Veddas were once rich and powerful. We stated that we could find no adequate reason for this belief, which is held only by the Sinhalese and is dismissed with contempt by all Veddas. It seemed to us that we had said enough on the subject, but the appearance of Mr Parker's recent work, *Ancient Ceylon*, which must always remain authoritative for much which concerns the Island, has persuaded us of the necessity for stating at greater length the reasons for our opinion.

Mr Parker's views on the subject of the former civilisation of the Veddas will be found on pp. 103 to 112 of *Ancient Ceylon*, and we cannot do better than begin our argument by quoting a considerable part of pp. 111 and 112 in which he both states the problem and summarises his views as to its solution.

"In dealing with the position of the Vaeddas, we are faced with this difficulty—that a portion of the race was relatively civilised in ancient times, while certain members of it are found at the present day almost in the state occupied by some of the most primitive peoples. We must adopt a theory which will include all the facts of the case; and not one which ignores some of the most important and significant and incontrovertible historical details and traditions. We cannot select the smallest and wildest group of Vaeddas, and because of their simple life as hunters place the whole race in the position which they con-

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

174 114 tinue to occupy...partly by accident and partly of their own free choice.

"My conclusion therefore is that whether there has been any retrogression of the present Forest Vaeddas from a certain low state of civilisation or not, in very early times a great part of the race had reached a much more advanced state of culture than the wilder members of it, whose more or less isolated life either as hunters, or as hunters-and-villagers, did not in many cases induce them to feel any desire to participate in it. This more civilised portion has absorbed the Gangetic settlers, and acquired their status and language, and with some intermixture of Dravidian blood, or in many instances without it, has become the existing Kandian Sinhalese race.

"The ancestors of the present few hunting Vaeddas—who now most probably number much less than one hundred—either abandoned, some centuries after Christ, a form of village life in which they were partly or chiefly hunters, and reverted to the forest life of their forefathers; or, like some of the wild hunting tribes of the South Indian hills, remained, at least until very recent years, in nearly the original condition of the first comers to Ceylon, apparently simply because they preferred the free untrammelled life in the woods, and found their accustomed habits and household articles suited to all the requirements of a hunter's existence in the forests of Ceylon. The evidence afforded by the caves appears to me to be in favour of the former theory, which is also supported by the loss of their original language and their adoption of the Sinhalese tongue.

"The majority, however, of those who did not coalesce with the Gangetic settlers and their descendants, or accept their mode of life and culture, have, in comparatively modern times, and in certain instances partly through compulsion—since portions of the forests in which they were accustomed to hunt have been cut down in order to permit rice and millet cultivation—to some extent adopted the more civilised existence of their neighbours. Many keep buffaloes, and all but those few who live only by hunting and fishing, grow millet and other plants suited to their jungle clearings. An exceptional few in favourable sites for it even cultivate rice, and, as some of them informed me, in recent

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

years have settled down permanently and have planted such fruit trees as Coconuts, Areka-nuts, and Plantains about their houses."

Mr Parker admits such intercourse between the races as is necessary to allow intermarriage and a considerable amount of social contact-metamorphosis, so that we are in complete agreement with him concerning the "majority" of whom he speaks in the last paragraph, and no one will doubt "that in very early times a great part of the race had reached a much more advanced state of culture than the wilder members of it." It therefore only remains to discuss his conclusions concerning those of whom he speaks as the "present Forest Vaeddas."

We hold that there can be little doubt as to which of the two hypotheses put forward by Mr Parker is the correct one, and in spite of the fact that he leans towards the opposite view we shall now proceed to summarise our reasons for believing that the few unsophisticated Veddas of the present day do in fact represent the aboriginal inhabitants of Ceylon.

In the first place let us consider their physical characters. Experts in comparative anatomy will turn to the work of the Sarasins to estimate for themselves the significance of the primitive osteological characters they describe; it is only necessary here to refer to the more obvious external characters in which the Veddas differ from the Sinhalese. A single glance at the photograph reproduced in Plate III shows that two men in this group differ in general appearance and in their greater stature from their comrades; these two men, as has been mentioned on p. 16, are half-breeds, as are those shown in figure 1 of Plate XIV. The younger man might pass for a Sinhalese and in features closely recalls the Kandyan Sinhalese figured by Deniker[1], who does not at all resemble the relatively broad faced and broad nosed Veddas shown in Plates III, IV, V and VII. Further, among the measurements given in Chapter I the average height of 24 male Veddas measured by the Sarasins is given as 1·55 m. (about 60½ inches), while the average height of 10 Kandyan Sinhalese whom they also measured is 1·61 m. or

[1] *Races of Man*, 1900, p. 416.

2: Bailey G-5 (ca. 1854) 1863
AX5 Vedda AX5

XXVI.—*An Account of the Wild Tribes of the Veddahs of Ceylon: their Habits, Customs, and Superstitions.* By JOHN BAILEY, B.A., Oxon., Principal Assistant Colonial Secretary of Ceylon.

114 "WE shall, in this part, speak of the inhabitants of this Country, with their Religion, and Customs, and other things belonging to them. Of these Natives there be too Sorts—Wild and Tame. I will begin with the former. For, as in these Woods, there are Wild Beasts, so Wild Men also."*

So wrote, nearly two hundred years ago, that truthful old chronicler Robert Knox; and, though he praises God he never saw one of these "wild men," he proceeds, nevertheless, to give us in a couple of pages, by far the best sketch of the Veddahs that has yet appeared, notwithstanding the multitude of pens that have been employed since his time, on Ceylon.

Early in 1854, I was appointed to the charge of the extensive district of Badulla, which comprises, besides the ancient Kandyan province of Ouvah, that portion of the island where the most barbarous Veddah tribes are found. My tastes led me to take every opportunity of studying their habits and customs. My official position gave me the greatest possible facilities for prosecuting my inquiries. [123]

I accumulated much information that was both curious and valuable, but my official duties prevented me from shaping my rough notes into a readable form. For years, my papers lay in my desk, half forgotten, and it is only now that a little unlooked

* An Historical Relation of the Island Ceylon, in the East Indies, etc., by Robert Knox, a Captive there near twenty years, folio, London, 1681.

2;Bailey G-5 (ca. 1854) 1863
AX5 Vedda AX5

for leisure enables me to follow the suggestion of a friend, and to endeavour to arrange the materials which I collected with so much care and labour.

At a time when the investigation of the origin of uncivilized races is attracting so much attention in England, I trust that the results of my inquiries and observations may not be considered devoid of interest; and, in this hope, I venture to present them, such as they are, to the Ethnological Society.

The following sketch of the Veddahs is the result of personal and often-repeated investigation among the people themselves: it is founded only on direct evidence; I have admitted nothing on hearsay. Indeed, so difficult is it to elicit anything from people in such a state of barbarism, that I have accepted even the most direct testimony with caution and have only adopted it after careful cross-examination had satisfied me of its trustworthiness. I have tested again and again the truth of every statement I have made, sometimes reluctantly abandoning a link here and there which would have made my case more complete, only from a *doubt* of the perfect accuracy of my information.*

The facts I state are, so far as I can judge, beyond dispute, if honest and patient inquiry be of any value. The deductions I draw from them are my own, and must go for what they are worth.

I limit my observations to the wildest tribes, for it is amongst

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* It may be said that it is a work of mere supererogation, if not presumption, on my part, to attempt to describe the Veddahs, seeing that Sir J. E. Tennent has so recently devoted several chapters of his work on Ceylon to this subject. But, interesting as these chapters are—perhaps the most interesting in the book—they contain little else than a comparison of the habits of the people of the island, as observed by the ancient voyagers in the fourth and fifth centuries, with the traditional but now long-exploded customs of the Veddahs as reported by Knox. The accomplished author throws no new light on the wild tribes of the Veddahs as they are. On the contrary, his account of them is in some important particulars defective, and even inaccurate. He glances casually at those tribes which are in the wildest state, touching with precision none of their peculiarities, and dwells in detail upon those only which, from long association with the Singalese and Tamil races, have lost much of their originality. Of the ancient aborigines he has compiled much that is curious. Of the existing Veddahs he has given us little besides an epitome of former notices.

An account of the aboriginal races of Ceylon, published under the authority of a late colonial secretary of the island, would naturally be accepted and quoted as accurate and authentic. Sir J. E. Tennent's chapters on the Veddahs, therefore, render it more incumbent on me to lay before the Society the results of my own inquiries. For, though the habits and customs of wild tribes are important aids in determining their origin, a description of them is worse than useless, unless it be made by a person competent of his own knowledge to describe them. I pretend to no competency beyond this.

2: Bailey G-5 (ca. 1854) 1863
AX5 Vedda AX5

those only who are the most barbarous, who have preserved in all essentials their isolation from other races intact, that we must expect to find the most marked peculiarities.

The term Veddah—or Weddah—in itself, indicates no particular race. It simply means "a hunter", and is, in India, applied to aboriginal or barbarous tribes generally.*

In this sense, a great portion of the population of the eastern parts of Ceylon appears, at some period or another, to have been so called. There are still extensive districts known as "Weddirata", or the country of the Veddahs, the inhabitants of which, although they are, owing to the remoteness of their situation, less civilized than the bulk of the people of the island, are not Veddahs, but Singhalese, in kindred, religion, and customs.

It is highly probable that the people of these remote districts and of others, where Veddah descent is still claimed, are more directly derived from the race which originally stocked the island than those who inhabit such parts of it as were more accessible to the settlers from Continental India, who, in process of time superseded the aborigines.†

But the people distinguished in Ceylon, by the name of Veddahs—wholly distinct, as I have said, even from those who, though now Singhalese, yet describe themselves as descended from Veddah ancestors, are to be found in the districts of Batti-

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* Weddâ (Singhalese) an archer; some trace it to Bedda (Jungle). Introduction to Alwis' Sidath Sangarawa.

Vedân (Tamil), a hunter—one who lives in the woods; a name given to rude tribes, aborigines in the Indian peninsula. Vedan (Tamil), corruptly Vaidan, Veddah, also Beddah, or Weden—a hunter, a fowler; a name given to wild tribes, inhabiting the hills and forests of the south of India almost in a state of nature—probably the aboriginal race of the peninsula. Prof. Wilson's *Glossary of Revenue and Judicial Terms*. The word Veddah is still used in Ceylon as a hunter, and so applied to persons, not "Veddah" in the limited sense of the word.

† The Weddirates were, under the native government, exempted from all service save military—the most honourable; and rendered tribute to the king, of beeswax, dried flesh, and honey, which was continued for some time after we obtained possession of the Kandyan provinces. But the inhabitants of these districts marry and associate with those of the adjoining districts, and are apparently the same people. There may exist some ethnical difference; indeed, I think even an unscientific eye can detect a difference in the appearance, not only of these people, but of the Wanniahs of the northern and central parts of Ceylon, when compared with the ordinary natives. I have tried to obtain skulls of the different races, of which there are many in the island, viz., Tamils, Moors, Singhalese of the low country and of the Kandyan provinces, the people of the Weddiratas—Wanniahs of Newerakalawiya and Batticalas—Mookwas of the north-west and east provinces, Malays, Goorowas, Rhodias, etc., but it is most difficult to obtain them. The subject may be worthy of the attention of the Ethnological Society, though beside the object of this paper.

2: Bailey G-5 (ca. 1854) 1863
AX5 Vedda AX5

ness; in others, that perplexed manner common in people of weak intellect. The women appear sharper and quicker than the men, unless it be that they have less *mauvais honts*, and acquit themselves better before company, but they are the most ordinary specimens of the sex I ever saw.*

The Veddahs bear a very striking resemblance to each other—both in feature and expression. And this is especially remarkable among those of Nilgala, who have preserved their ancient customs more completely than their brethren of Bintenne, who live in a less secluded country, have been able to do.

Their clothing—so to speak—is the most scanty conceivable. A scrap of dirty cloth, scarcely larger than the paper on which I write, supported in front by a string round the waist, being a complete Veddah suit for male or female; for the rag that does duty for crinoline, is scarcely less diminutive than that which represents the male garmenta† . Indeed, almost the only difference in the costume of the men and women is, that the latter have their ears pierced, and wear in the lobes round studs of ivory.

Neither sex is remarkable for personal cleanliness, and with their rugged unkempt locks half obscuring their features, the Veddahs certainly realize all one's preconceived notions of the most barbarous savages.

Knox's picture of "a Vadda, or Wild Man" is a fancy portrait, and decidedly flattering. They do not "tye their hair on their crowns in a bunch", nor do they indulge in nearly so much drapery or beard as is worn by that stout well-to-do-looking gentleman, who is placidly smoking an imaginary pipe, for smoking is a luxury at which the Veddahs have not yet arrived. The contrast between Knox's idea of the wild men, and their actual appearance, is amusing.

When brought in from their forests to be "looked at," they huddle themselves together like a herd of wild and timid animals driven into a corner from which there is no escape. Attract their attention by a present of rice or cloth, and in an instant they become like eager children, scrambling for a new toy,—forget the presence of strangers, and intent only on what is before them, jostle each other, clamouring for a fair division of the spoil, and complaining loudly against those of their companions whom they suspect of having got more than their share of the good things.

But it is not fair to judge of them when so utterly out of their

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* I saw some of them display the liveliest curiosity at the sight of their "white sisters", two remarkably good specimens of whom found their way to Nilgala in 1857.

† Formerly the sacking-like bark of the "Riti tree" (*antiaris innoxia*, or *A. saccadora*) supplied the place of cloth; and bags made of this fibrous bark are still used by the Singhalese for carrying rice, etc.

2:Bailey G-5 (ca. 1854) 1863
AX5 Vedda AX5

differ from the Singhalese, and those which, though Singhalese, are, in the sense here used, peculiar to the Veddahs. It has been suggested to me that some of the former are derived directly from the Sanskrit, but as I am incompetent to judge of the accuracy of these suggestions, I do not venture to give the conjectural derivations which I have received.

I have, myself, noted down, and caused to be noted down from dictation, several Veddah charms, which are not, I am informed, known to the Singhalese, though in some there is a certain resemblance to charms in use by the latter. Whether corrupted during the many ages in which they have been unintelligently repeated, or whether they are in a form of Singhalese now obsolete, or both, they are not easily translated. They are charms used in illness, and for protection against elephants, leopards, bears, and wild boars.

The Veddahs are at present chiefly known by names similar to those in use among the neighbouring Singhalese, and it is curious to observe how oddly they are jumbled together. In one family are to be found names which would only be appropriate to Kandyans of the highest caste, and names which could only be borne by the lowest. Some of their names, too, belong to Hindoos, and not to Singhalese. Some are not proper names at all; while, most strange of all, others, though utterly unknown in Ceylon, either to Tamils or Singhalese, are in common use in Bengal, and refer directly to Hindoo deities, or personages mentioned in the Puránas.

The names of the preceding generation appear to have differed in a very marked manner from the Singhalese names by which the Veddahs now are for the most part known; and those in the list appended to this paper are chiefly the names of the fathers and mothers of the present Veddahs. Most of these I was able, by the kindness of Colonel Vincent Eyre, C.B., R.A., to submit to the inspection of Professor Lees, of Bengal, and they are pronounced by him to have a decided Sanskrit affinity.

It is a singular and significant fact, that not only are many of their names unknown in Ceylon, but their meaning is utterly unintelligible to the Veddahs themselves, among whom they were family designations which have descended to them from father to son for ages.

It is strange that so many have written of the Veddahs, and have been contented with information at once scanty and inaccurate. Davy believed that they had no names.* Tennent affirms that they have no charms—no "instinct of worship"—and doubts

* Davy, *Account of the Veddahs*, p. 115 of his work.

2: Bailey G-5 (ca. 1854) 1863
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114 if they have even any language. "Some," he says, "are so degraded that it has appeared doubtful whether they possess any language whatever; and not only is their dialect incomprehensible to a Singhalese, but even their communications with each other are made by signs, grimaces, and guttural sounds, which bear little or no resemblance to distinct words or systematized language."* I can only say that I have been repeatedly among the very wildest of the race—indeed the "wretched outcasts," here so summarily deprived of the power of speech, are those whom I have been endeavouring to describe, and I never knew one of them at a loss for words sufficiently intelligible to convey his meaning, not to his fellows only, but to the Singhalese of the neighbourhood, who are all, more or less, acquainted with the Veddah patois.

775 [681] The Veddahs have no idea of a future state of rewards and punishments; for the vague vestige of a belief in retributive justice, which I have before mentioned, cannot be said to show any faith in the punishment by a Superior Power of sinners in this world.

114 It has been most truly said that it is a matter of almost insuperable difficulty to arrive at a proper understanding of the creed of barbarous tribes through the medium of direct questioning, and that nothing can be more vague than all their statements on this most important subject.†

771 It is not to be wondered at that a people so barbarous as the Veddahs are—without literature of any kind—who have lived in the depth of the forests in almost complete seclusion for centuries on centuries, should be incapable themselves of giving any definite or intelligent account of what they do believe. They are unable to express in language their ideas on subjects, which, even in their own minds, have never assumed any distinct form; and though they are ready enough to answer the questions put to them, it is no easy task so to frame them as to make their object intelligible to such rude and unlettered savages. The result

776 of the most patient inquiry is, that the Veddahs have a vague belief in a host of undefined spirits, whose influence is rather for good than for evil. Still, vague as this belief is, not even the

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* Tennent, vol. ii, pt. ix, c. iii, p. 441, 2nd ed. This is stated on the authority of "a gentleman who resided long in their vicinity, G. R. Mercer, Esq., of the Civil Service, who held office at Badulla." Those who remember that gentleman's love of a practical joke, will smile at seeing this "joke" gravely recorded in the *Physical, Historical, and Topographical Account of the Island of Ceylon*, by Sir J. Emerson Tennent, K.C.S., LL.D., etc.; and my able predecessor, Mr. Mercer, must have been as much amused at seeing it there, as any one else.

† See Hodgson's "Brief Note on Indian Ethnology," Bengal Asiatic Society's *Journal*, March 1849.

3:Naish G-5 (1925) 1930 AX5 Vedda AX5

bours' language, customs, and manner of life. In a few of the remoter forest fastnesses of the interior there are still to be found more or less pure-blooded Veddas who continue to support life by the precarious *chena* cultivation and by hunting: but in addition to these pure-blooded Veddas, who are a very feeble folk indeed in point of numbers, the inhabitants of many of what are generally recognized as Sinhalese villages, and the so-called "coast Veddas," who have their settlements in a few places along the eastern coast to the north of Batticaloa, are to a greater or less extent of Vedda origin. The Veddas as a race have been visited and described by C. G. and B. Z. Seligmann [1] and more recently by Dr. R. L. Spittel [2] of Colombo. Of the coast Veddas the Seligmanns say,—"although these coast Veddas, or Verdas as they call themselves, have intermarried with the Tamils and have adopted many Tamil customs, they still have remains of the old clan system of the Veddas, and although they usually speak Tamil, the majority of them say they have a language of their own which they consider to be the old Vedda language, and which was found to be Sinhalese. They have roughly-built temples, and we were told independently in two settlements that the chief agency worshipped was called Kapalpe or Kabalpe, *i.e.*, "ship spirit." At first we feared some misunderstanding, but when one of us was shown within one of their temples, into which after some trouble he was allowed to penetrate, a small model of a ship partly square rigged was seen, and it was stated that at a special ceremony this was hoisted to the top of a pole some thirty feet tall which stood outside the temple." [3] The ceremony to be described in what follows appears to be in fact that conducted for the propitiation of this "ship spirit" and of the goddess Ammal, and, if so, it is that which the Seligmanns saw rehearsed, in part at any rate, at Vakarai.[4] The description, therefore, imperfect and perhaps inaccurate in some details as it may be, being

[1] C. G. and B. Z. Seligmann, *The Veddas*. See also *Spolia Zeylanica*, vol. v, Part xx, Dec. 1908, pp. 155 *et seq.*

[2] R. L. Spittel, *Wild Ceylon*.

[3] C. G. and B. Z. Seligmann, *Spolia Zeylanica*, vol. v, Part xx, Dec. 1908, pp. 156, 157.

[4] *The Veddas*, pp. 333-9.

3:Naish G-5 (1925) 1930 AX5 Vedda AX5

123 796 guidance I touched the flowers in acknowledgement. After this the rice which had meanwhile been cooked in the enclosure in front of the shrine was offered to the goddess at the shrine, and the enclosure itself was removed.

The offering of the rice appeared to mark the conclusion of the first stage of the ceremony, for it was followed by a procession of those who were to take part in the subsequent dancing,—apparently accompanied by the image of the goddess,—out of the clearing and, as I was informed, down to the river about half a mile away for the sacred bath.

Time dragged by. The moonlight flooded the clearing, showing the ranks of the spectators sitting in their places with oriental patience and talking in undertones. At last the procession of dancers re-entered the clearing and advanced to the open space in front of the shrine. Here a ritual was gone through which seemed to be intended to induce in the dancers a state of "possession," [7] and after the performance of this ritual the dances began.

First of all two principal dancers, wearing what were evidently ceremonial jackets of red cloth, took, each of them, in one hand one of the wooden swords previously mentioned and in the other [535] a bunch of leaves, and went in and out among the people with a queer shuffling step and a curious rhythmic brandishing of the swords and leaves. Once or twice the leader stopped, and laying his sword upon the head of some person in the crowd began to [787] prophesy.[8] One prophecy, as interpreted to me by the Chief Headman, concerned the outbreak of cholera, and was in the form

[7] The Seligmanns, on pp. 134-5 of *The Veddas*, discuss at some length the nature of "possession" in the Vedda ritual dances.

[8] My impression at the time was that in uttering these prophecies the [114 197] leader of the dance used the Vedda language. Certainly the language used did not appear to me to be either Sinhalese or Tamil. It is true that the Seligmanns say, in the passage quoted in the text, that the "old Vedda language" as spoken by the coast Veddas was found to be Sinhalese; but (i) it seems at least possible that the Vedda language may remain to some extent in ritual use among them; and (ii) I am inclined to think that in the ceremony here described the invocation of Rahu Yaka, described by the Seligmanns on pp. 254-9 of *The Veddas*, was combined with the worship of Amunai and Kapalpa, described by

3:Naish G-5 (1925) 1930 AX5 Vedda AX5

of an exhortation to the villagers not to be afraid, as no harm would come to them. It need hardly be said that such a prophecy was extremely *à propos* from my point of view. I began to think that perhaps the Chief Headman was right and the time spent upon the ceremony was not wholly wasted.

The two principal dancers at length finished their dance and returned to their station near the shrine; and in their place ten or a dozen people, with a very old man as *choregos*, danced a similar dance, threading their way among the ranks of the people in single file. From time to time they would suddenly break off their dance, and rushing back tumultuously to the open space about the "maypole" would beat upon the pole with the bunches of leaves which each of them held in either hand, crying "*Wach! wach! wach!*" The Chief Headman, himself a Hindu, gave me the following interesting interpretation of the symbolism of this dance:—"The pole represents Brahma, the Source of Life, and the dancers wandering about among the people represent human life, at the end of which the soul returns to its Creator for a while with glad cries."

Later this dance was again danced by the same persons, led by the two red-jacketed principal dancers. Then the announcement was made that the goddess was coming from the river, and the two principal dancers began a very solemn, ecstatic dance under a canopy. As they danced the excitement grew tenser and tenser and their motions became more and more convulsive. They were firmly held by those near them,—a precaution necessary, the Chief Headman assured me, to prevent them from running amok among the spectators,—and seemed to struggle to shake off the restraint thus put upon them. Gradually, however, their efforts slackened, and they finally sank unconscious upon the ground.[9]

them on pp. 335-9, and that the "principal dancers" mentioned were not coast Veddas, but were brought in from outside. The point is one of some interest; but as, unfortunately, I did not go into it at the time, I do not feel at all certain about it.

[9] The Seligmanns say on p. 134 of *The Veddas*, "Most sincere practitioners whom we interrogated in different localities agreed that . . . they never entirely lost consciousness." After the dance here described the

5: Spittel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5

2. VEDDAS OF GUNNER'S QUOIN

THE ferry at Periathurai marked the end of our river journey. Some miles inland was the rock called Gunner's Quoin round which Veddas lived. 131

Under a bo-tree by the river was an image of Ganesha the pot bellied, elephant-headed Hindoo god with offerings of withered lotus flowers before him. In a temple hard by, were massive bells and drums that kept deafening accompaniment on many a ceremonial day when peacock-plumed men, in the self-imposed torture of skewered cheek and pronged back, bounded hither and thither in delirious dance; and here were the implements, prongs and tridents, these frenzied devotees had dedicated to their unhearing god.

At the Tamil village of Manampitiya we were regaled with an old man's tales of the Veddas. He told us of one Patabanda only recently dead, called *walige**-Patabanda owing to his habit of wearing his loin cloth long behind. It appeared this Vedda was a fine marksman. A *rata-mahatmaya*† once wishing to test his skill pointed to a small jak fruit on a tall tree and asked him to shoot. The arrow flew true and stuck in the fruit; whereupon the Vedda feigning anger said roughly, "Now give me my arrow; it was you who asked me to shoot". The timid chief proffered money which was disdainfully refused. The Vedda then taking another arrow hit the stem of the fruit so that it fell and enabled him to recover both arrow and fruit. Thus do men pass into fable. 114 173

We were told many another tale of Veddas and their ways, and of matters connected with the ancient ruins to be found on the rock; of an anchorite who had lived in a cave there unharmed by the bears; and of ancient Vedda kings captured by stratagem and fraud.

A walk of five miles the next morning brought us to the foot of Gunner's Quoin. I was now brimming with expectancy; for I was about to see for the first time the Veddas in their homes; that aboriginal people who had time and again attracted the scholars of Europe, and in whose veins flowed the oldest blood of the inhabitants of Ceylon. They were here when Wijeya came from India in 543 B.C. and founded the Sinhalese dynasty; long earlier, when that Buddha came who preached to his followers at Mahiyangana after having put to flight the Yakkhas (Veddas?); to an even still older beginning their ancestry went, to a time in the stone age when man vied for existence with prehistoric forms. 114

To-day hardly a Vedda true to the old traditions survives; not one that uses beaten bark for apparel, or depends for sustenance solely on the jungle. The inroads of civilisation and the effects of miscegenation with the neighbouring Sinhalese or Tamils are tending surely towards the extinction of the race. Yet, for all that, many of the old Vedda traits still survive in their degenerate descendants and these are still a link with an unfathomable past. 144 178

*Tail †Kandyan chief [P. 7]

5: Spittel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5

CHAPTER II

THE VEDDAS OF HENEBEDDE

I. NUWARAGALA AND BEYOND

Talk not of temples, there is one
Built without hands, to mankind given;
Its lamps are the meridian sun
And all the stars of heaven,
Its walls are the cerulean sky,
Its floor the earth so green and fair,
The dome its vast immensity;
All Nature worships there.

VEDDER

FOR months we had nursed the prospect of a ramble in the Vedda country. Professor Seligmann, writing some nine years previously of the parts we hoped to visit, had said: 114

"We met with only four families who still led the life described by Bailey in 1863, and these were not among the Nilgalla but among the Nuwaragala hills...,...After visiting so many decaying or degenerate communities a refreshing state of affairs was found at Sittala Wanniya. Here there were at least four families who were living the life their forefathers had lived for generations without perceptible change. They still found game, honey and yams in quantities sufficient not only to support life, but to have a surplus to barter with the Moormen or to take into the nearest Sinhalese village to exchange for iron, pots and occasional rice and coconuts."*

Thus it was that the Nuwaragala and Sittala Wanniya terrain came to be the object of our search. But reaching Maha Oya we received a rude awakening at the outset. We were questioning our guides regarding the route when to our surprise they told us that no Veddas now remained in Sittala Wanniya; that some few who had been at Galmede had either [131] died or gone eastward: and that, not certainly for two generations had Veddas been known to inhabit the Nuwaragala caves. To see Veddas, they said, we would have to go to Henebedde and Danigala, places within easier access of Bibile farther south. We had no choice but to change our plans and commit ourselves to the larger undertaking of working down through Henebedde to the high road at Bibile, after a journey of some sixty miles through the forest.

The jungle is as a home to some; they are never so happy as when they are amidst its delight and mystery. The bird songs, the sun glimmering

*The Veddas by C. G. and B. Z. Seligman [p. 11]

5: Spittel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5

were loath to purchase their intimacy with gifts. Time enough for that, when we had won them over by less humiliating means. Besides, these Veddas were evidently spoilt, and we wished to show them they were not the important personages they imagined themselves to be.

"We are going then," said Handuna. It was now our turn for dejection. Was it for such an ungracious issue we had travelled so far?

I had a last card, having brought some neosalvarsan, a sovereign remedy for yaws so rife among these people. The offer was received with indifference. There was only one case among them, they said, and the patient was too ill to come. This being just what we wanted, I offered to visit them the next morning.

"You cannot come where we live unless we allow you," said the irrepressible Kaira. "And we won't show you our caves or anything, unless you give us presents."

Sick with exasperation and disgust at the behaviour of these impossible children, I told them they could take our offer or leave it as they chose, and turned to other work. The result was a grudging acquiescence; and, leaving a guide behind, they went away.

A word of explanation regarding the sophistication of a people so remote. They were in fact about the purest-blooded Veddas extant; indeed, it was to this very circumstance they owed their disappointing behaviour; for it had attracted Seligamann among them. What that implied may well be imagined. To obtain the valuable sociological information with which his book abounds, he had gained the confidence of these folk with scrupulous consideration and kindness, showering on them gifts of all kinds. Moreover, the patient investigation of the most intimate details of their lives by such a man, heightened their self-esteem. Of this we had an amusing illustration. I was obliged to admonish a group of Sinhalese that embarrassed us with their attentions. A Vedda sidled up and, tapping me familiarly on the shoulder, whispered, "Those people don't like us, they are jealous of us. We and you gentlemen are one; they are different!"

To dismiss these Veddas as spoilt uninteresting folk would imply failure to discern their innate simplicity, beneath the veneer of pose and importunity, for which contact with an indulgent stranger had been responsible. In their homes they still are as artless as their forbears were before ever white man set foot on these shores.

We were out hunting early that afternoon, when a sudden snapping sound arrested our attention. The Vedda we were with listened a few seconds. "Catching *talagoyas*," (monitor-lizards), he said laconically. The excited barking of a dog and rebuking human voices soon confirmed his conjecture. Going up, we found two men, one of whom carried a large quivering monitor just killed; while two dogs, still spirited with the chase, danced round their victim and growled and snapped at us. One of the men now set about to disjoint the quarry's tail at the middle, leaving it connected only by a tag of sinew; then, slitting the submandibular web, he rove the tail through till it locked at the division, making the reptile eat its own tail as it were, and carried it neatly in a loop. The monitor is best hunted at high noon; after four in the afternoon it takes to trees and holes.

5: Spittel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5

on serener days, it flamed through the Island making it its permanent home, while in India, the land of its birth, it dwindled away.

We had undertaken this trip with the object of visiting Meminigallagolla where we learned the wildest Veddas of the Eastern province lived; but on coming to Omuna we found that that place, only twelve miles away, was quite unknown to the present folk of Omuna, a pathless barrier of dense jungle intervening. We made the best of a bad job; and, abandoning our original project, struck west for Dolagalwella.

At evening we camped by a desolate pool called *Havan-kapane-mulle* (rush-cutting nook). There is barely a spot in these jungles, however lone, that has not its name, thanks to the nomadic Veddas. Here was a glade in which they hunted, or a pool at which they drank, there a hole in which an axe was found (*Poro-thutu-walle*).

The only indications of the track we followed were the barely recognisable prunings, fifteen years old, of saplings. The forest was ideal for travel; in the shelter of the great trees the morning air was cool and refreshing. Coming to the Maduru Oya we walked a mile up-stream and climbed the mimosa-covered bank, soon to be lost in a wilderness of trees. A leader monkey yelled a warning to his clan, a surprised sambur belled startlingly close; but after that a silence prevailed unbroken by the song of a single bird. We spent the night by a rocky streamlet close-hugged by dense forest walls. Heavy clouds crept over us to the rumblings of thunder. The blurred crescent of the moon struggled for freedom. Our campfires crackled in the ghostly gloom, and quiet human voices pervaded the forest's deadly stillness save for the melody of the trickling water.

> A savage place! as holy and enchanted
> As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
> By woman wailing for her demon lover.

Deserted Mahaella marked the limit of our westward journey. Here we struck at right angles the northern track to Yakkure, but, before taking it, deviated south to the village of Dolagalwella. For three days we had followed uncertain game trails, and seen no human beings besides those of our company. The path now began to show signs of use: there were chipped trees, polished stones on which axes had been whetted, and fire-places where monitors were roasted. Obviously we were nearing civilisation! Indeed, here it was.

Scaling a strong stockade we found ourselves in a *chena*, some twelve acres in extent, in which nestled the half dozen huts of the closely related families of a Vedda patriarchy. The maize and *kurrukkan* crops had been taken, and the place was now rank with a catch-crop of vegetables and fruit: beans, brinjals, melons, cassava, plantains and papaws. Chillies luxuriated; there was not a compound but had its vermilion heap, not a hut but had a section partitioned off with frame and fire-place for drying them during the rains; chillies were the current coin with which these folk traded with the pedlar Moors.

The males of the settlement were away in quest of food, and only the women and children remained. No folk on earth, perhaps, are shier than Vedda women; in the presence of the stranger they are dumb. Some of them were relatively fair-complexioned, presumably from Kandyan admixture; all wore an abundance of bead ornaments, finger

5: Spittel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5

He left the group and seated himself before me—a sinewy, handsome, bearded man of perhaps forty.

"Those Veddas," he said contemplatively, when I told him how we stood; "who can say where they are? In one cave to-day, in a another to-morrow. They said they came from Dhik-galge, did they? But you can never take a Vedda's word for that. If they are not there—what then? All our trouble will be in vain. I cannot say I know the caves in those hills very well. I have only been among them once, and that many years ago, when I took my wife from her people. She and I wandered about there. How well she knew the trails, she who had trodden them but once as a little child; for her home, like mine, was elsewhere. I would see a track and point to it saying, 'This must be the way to the cave.' 'No,' she would say 'that leads to the wilderness; there should be a path by that tree yonder'; and she would always be right. I remember well the *kong* tree by the Alu-galge; I shot two monkeys and we ate them there." And so his thoughts rambled amid honey-moon scenes he loved to recall.

But, as this meandering led nowhere, I offered a reward of five rupees to anyone who would show me the Veddas in their caves on the morrow, and took to bed. For long I lay pondering what manner of man was the Chetty who could live in this wilderness with a Vedda women for wife. He seemed to know intimately every Vedda in the district, and had sometimes even shared their caves. He remained an enigma, as also that smile of his, no more than a mere display of the teeth, which imbued the knit, pathetic cast of his features with an expression whether of saintliness or villainy, it was hard to tell. Ostensibly he was here to rear cattle; but why come so far for that?

The next morning, accompanied by Meenemaruwa, the Chetty and a half-Vedda of Galmede, we set out on our quest. The plan was this; we were to travel to a spot where a certain stream crossed the path: there we would probably find foot-prints; if these led to the hills we would follow, if in the opposite direction, pursuit would be useless, as that would imply that the Veddas had returned to their homes in Bingoda fifteen miles away; for at this season the Veddas did not live in their caves, and the party we were in search of must have come on a few days hunting. I now understood the reticence of these people to take me on what might prove a wild goose chase; and learnt, what was more important, that the Veddas of Galmede were the Veddas of Bingoda.

We came to the stream; the foot-prints were there. Our guides bent down eagerly examining them. "This is Suthubanda's," they said "and this Badapissa's; this other is a woman's; no, it's a boy's." The tracks pointed towards the hills! The chase began.

Meenemaruwa led, for he alone could decipher that trail, three days old, on the hard dry ground. Once we left the stream there was apparently not the faintest indication of a foot-mark; but our guide moved rapidly along, and soon involved us in an enforested labyrinth of hills. Very occasionally a broken twig would furnish a clue. Indicating one of these Meenemaruwa said, "Now, that would never have been done had old Handuna been alive. 'Hu,' he would have said, slapping the errant one, 'do you want to show everybody the way to our caves; then where would we go if people came after us?' To the rock, the cave and the hive there must be no clue; that is the Vedda law.

5: Spittel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5

Even a Vedda child should be able to pick its way through the jungle with no mark to guide it."

We had travelled thus a long while, and for all I knew had lost all trace of the Veddas, when we struck a stream where the foot-prints of a man and a dog were evident. Soon we were climbing up to Dhik-galge, to find, alas! that not only was it deserted, but that no Veddas had been near it for many a long day. The Veddas had lied to the Chetty!

The cave we found ourselves in was a magnificent one—long, spacious and open to the sky, with tall straight trees towering before it. Below, a stream babbled over rocks, making delightful bathing pools. Around, was the tenderest music of birds. It was a romantic spot, specially designed, as it were, by Nature for the jungle-dweller. The dome of the cave was covered with crude drawings. A broken pot had been put in a niche. There were fragments of filthy rag, a large cooking frame and dry leaves which had long previously been slept upon. The rocky floor was smooth in places where *kurrukkan* had been rubbed to flour with flat worn stones, and cupped where maize had been pounded. The *aratchi* of Paragahakelle had spoken true. A handful of moss, peeping from a crevice, revealed, when disturbed, a couple of fledglings. Our first thought was that they were young swiftlets, left there to die by ruthless nest-hunters; but they flew too strongly for that; and soon, the piteous cries of the parent birds told us that we had inadvertently rifled a fly-catcher's nest.

It was mid-day, and, being very tired, we sat down to a meal; I to camp-pie and chocolate, the others to raw cassava. Our hunger abated, I reminded our guides that my offer of a reward still stood, and that he would get it, who brought me up with even one of those Veddas wherever he might be. Asking us to stay where we were, Meenemaruwa and the half-Vedda of Galmede vanished into the jungle.

The better part of an hour must have elapsed when we heard the latter calling to us excitedly. He said that Meenemaruwa was in hot pursuit of the Veddas who, to judge by their traces, were making away at great speed, evidently scared by the sight of my shoe-prints.

Following at a run, we eventually came upon them—a wild, swarthy group of two men and two boys, freighted with the spoils of the chase; each with his sackful of edible bird's nests, dried sambur meat and *bambara* honey; the leaders with two old muzzle-loaders. May the picture not fade. Suthubanda was there, and the youth Badapissa as our sleuths had told us. But the figure that arrested my fancy most was a wild, fiery-eyed, shaggy-haired fellow of twenty-five—an ebon Apollo. Gama he was called because he was born on a journey (*gamana*). To his waist was attached the inflated bladder of the sambur they had killed. Nor did his looks belie his character, for, even as we came up, he flared into foul-mouthed fury at a tired, inoffensive boy of their company.

They were delighted with the tobacco and betel we shared out to them, and gave us honey in return. Money they refused. When we asked them how it was that they had not been in Dhik-galge as they had said they were, their only answer was a hearty laugh!

It was hail and farewell! for the hour was past noon, and the Veddas had many miles to make before nightfall; so had we. But those shadows of the spangled forest were soon to call me again.

CHAPTER VI

VEDDAS OF BINGODA

I. BINGODA HOMES

Innumerable years had flown,
Since first the chisel in her hand
Necessity, the sculptor, took,
And in her spacious meaning planned
These forms, and that eternal look.

L. BINYON

197 [101] CONCEDE me three points and I shall attempt to show that there exist in Ceylon to-day Veddas worthy of the name. Language, apparel and weapons are the concessions I ask.

Let us begin by confessing, that the Veddas we shall tell of have no pure language of their own, but merely a patois, in which Sinhalese words predominate and Vedda words are few; their clothing is not the traditional 291 leaf or threshed *riti* bark, but fragments of foul rag affording, if anything, less cover; the weapons they favour are guns (of a type almost as 411 dangerous to user as to quarry) and not bows and arrows which they employ only in sore necessity.

Vital issues, you will say, which should deprive this people of their name. But language, dress and arms may change without materially altering, for a time at least, ancient customs and primeval instincts.

101 The word Vedda originally meant hunter; and a people supreme in jungle-craft, always capable of gleaning from the unfriendly forests a sufficiency for their needs and utterly incompetent to husband even the primitive agriculture of the *chena*, has surely a claim to the name.

224 [411] [427] It must not be supposed that every Vedda possesses a gun; far from it; occasionally there may be a single weapon to a whole clan. The usual thing is for the Sinhalese or Moors to lend their guns to these superb trackers, who never waste a shot and seldom return without their quarry, a large share of which goes by agreement to the owner of the gun.

114 Of my first accidental meeting with these Veddas amid the hills of Galmede, I have already told. Barely four months had elapsed before I found myself renewing their acquaintance; this time with set purpose.

Arriving at the forest village of Mullegama, sacred to Buddhists, and abounding in lime groves and Moors, I was fortunate enough to run up against my friend Kaurala of Kottelinde, who, so difficult of acquisition before, now became our willing guide.

131 Bingoda, the home of our Veddas, is some three miles from Mullegama, and lies on the Dhungolla Oya, a tributary of the Magalavatan Aar which connects Bingoda with Galmede, ten miles away—all in the circuit of

18: Kleiweg De Zwaan E-5 (1906-1910) 1925 OB1 Indonesia OB1
Prehisteric Philippines OA3
Vedda AX5
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142
144

found in Philippine caves. This particular /106/ skull seems to indicate a race of people of short stature, sub-brachycephalic, with receding forehead, an arcus supraorbitals which protrudes only slightly; a very prognathous and also very platyrrhine race. Sanchez believes that this race preceded the present Negrito groups.

PP 114

However, it appears to me that this conclusion is very premature, based as it is on only one skull of which one does not even know its correct age. (1)

1. D. Sanchez y Sanshez, "Un cráneo humano prehistorico de Manilla /A Prehistoric Human Skull of Manila/," Memorias de la Real Soc. española de Historia Natural, Vol. XI, 1921.

I 144 114

Another racial element of the Indonesian Archipelago is the Vedda type, which probably arrived there later than the Negritos and which has become known mainly by the explorations of the Sarasins, Rudolph Martin, and Skeat and Blagden.

V 114 [101]

Paul and Fritz Sarasin have made a careful study of the Vedda tribes of the island of Ceylon. In their excellent book Die Weddas von Ceylon und die sie umgebenden Völkerschaften (Wiesbaden, 1892 and 1893), one can find a very extensive description of those tribes, both from an ethnographical and anthropological angle. The Veddas of Ceylon are a very rare racial element /107/ who lived in the

V 131